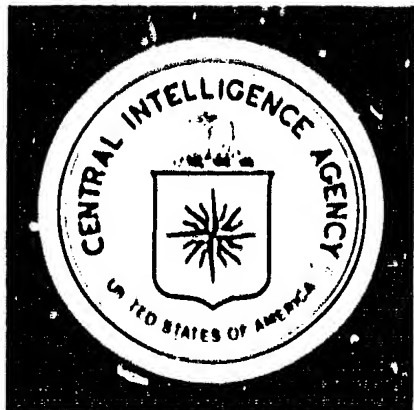


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LAOSNegotiations Obstacle

The present round of negotiations in Vientiane appears to have hit its first real snag. On 21 June, chief Lao Communist negotiator Phoumi Vongvichit demanded that three Pathet Lao battalions be stationed on Vientiane's outskirts and that two others be located outside Luang Prabang to provide security for Lao Communist ministers. According to government negotiator Pheng Phongsavan, Phoumi claims that if he does not obtain satisfaction on this point, he will break off the talks and return to Sam Neua. Phoumi earlier had rejected government proposals for a joint police force in the two cities or for the use of neutralist troops furnished by both sides.

Prime Minister Souvanna, who clearly still hopes to meet his self-imposed deadline of 1 July for completion of a new agreement, has accepted Phoumi's demand because he is convinced the Communists will not compromise on this issue. The Lao Army General Staff, however, has already expressed its disapproval. Souvanna is to meet with his generals to try to bring them into line. Pheng has told the US charge that Souvanna is ready to use his familiar tactic of threatening to resign if the generals prove obstinate.

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CAMBODIAThe Military Situation

Three of the six government battalions assigned to clear a section of Route 5 have arrived at Sala Lek Pram, 35 miles northwest of Phnom Penh. The remaining battalions are due to reach Sala Lek Pram on 21 June. To the east, the Khmer Communists continue to resist government efforts to reopen Route 6 between Phaav and Skoun. Elsewhere, government troops on 21 June continued sweep operations along Route 4 west of Phnom Penh and along Routes 2 and 3 south of the capital and reported only light contacts. [REDACTED]

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